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USSR Weekly Review

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USSR WEEKLY REVIEW

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This publication is prepared by the USSR Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis, with occasional contributions from other offices within the National Foreign Assessment Center. The views presented are the personal judgments of analysts on significant events or trends in Soviet foreign and domestic affairs. Although the analysis centers on political matters, it discusses politically relevant economic or strategic trends when appropriate. Differences of opinion are sometimes aired to present consumers with a range of analytical views. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles or to

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Soviet Journal Presents Resolution of Sino-US Relations
as an Open Question

A lengthy unsigned article in the issue of the USA Institute's journal *USA*, signed to press on 12 January, carries an exhaustive analysis of the problems, status, and prospects of the relationship between the United States and China. The article reveals the scrupulous attention paid by the Soviets to every nuance in Sino-US relations, including the positions of leading US academics, US and Chinese Government officials, status of trade, and any shifts, great or small, in overall trends. It concludes with a warning that Moscow is aware of the allegedly anti-Soviet nature of this relationship and will react to developments accordingly.

While attempting to present a seemingly objective picture of Sino-US relations--and indeed pointing out in unusual detail the objective problems besetting any further breakthrough between Washington and Peking--its overall thrust is to paint the Chinese as the suitors in an attempt to draw the United States into more active collusion against the USSR. The United States is portrayed as seeking points of contact and opportunities to cooperate with the Chinese, but deliberating its overall response carefully. The conflicting internal advice and pressures on the US administration in its efforts to formulate China policy are spelled out in great detail. It refrains from direct criticism of the US administration.

The motivation for this slant could merely reflect the relatively pro-US bias often ascribed to the USA Institute. It could also be a response by the authors to hardliners--in the party International Department, perhaps--who may tend to condemn the United States and China equally for "anti-Soviet collusion." Although the article leaves as an open question how far the United States will go in its efforts to achieve normalization

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with Peking, its attitude on Sino-US relations up to the present is that "such relations hardly bode well for the outside world."

Peking Presses Ahead While Washington Temporizes

The article opens with a polemical treatment of the Chinese aspect of the relationship, stating that:

- The Chinese leaders have completely renounced class positions by following Mao and Chou's policy of attempting to unite with the United States against the Soviet Union.
- The Chinese leaders, while stressing disagreements in principle with the United States, are doing everything "to maintain the momentum of rapprochement with that country."
- The Chinese goal is to push the Americans into a "head-on" struggle with the USSR by any means.
- Peking has abandoned its principled position on the "two Chinas" question by allowing the United States to maintain, de facto, such a policy. It has made this concession in an effort to knock together an international anti-Soviet alliance.

The United States, on the other hand, is said to be playing a clever, albeit cautious, game in face of these Chinese policies. President Carter is presented as continuing the policy of Presidents Nixon and Ford by approaching relations with China as a central foreign policy task. Nevertheless, the article alleges, the new administration has not rushed ahead in its China policy for several reasons:

- After receiving assurances from the new Chinese leadership that its basic policies toward the United States and the Soviet Union would not change, and that the policy of rapprochement with the United States would continue, the US administration concluded that there was no need to force the pace of normalizing relations.

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- A number of US Government experts have concluded that Peking has no choice but to maintain its present relations with the United States, however ambivalent they may be.
- Indeed, without exerting any effort (emphasis added) the United States has achieved nearly all its goals with China. The Chinese leaders have dissociated themselves from the socialist community, the United States has established "very lively" political, economic, and other contacts with China, and, as previously noted, established a de facto two-Chinas policy.

Problems Between Washington and Peking

USA is careful to point out, however, that the Sino-US relationship is beset with difficulties and contradictions, providing examples and evidence:

- "If we were to try to represent American-Chinese relations in the last 18 months by diagram, the curved line would slope down rather than up"
- It cites Western press articles and academics to show that after the first rush of enthusiasm in the United States, a more difficult stage in the relationship has been reached involving the complex problems of normalization and Taiwan.
- It cites trade statistics showing a sharp decline in bilateral trade since 1974 and observes that China holds out for substantial improvement in this area only after the establishment of full diplomatic relations.
- It notes particularly that in 1977 Peking repeatedly showed displeasure at President Carter's "ambiguous" position on American-Chinese relations and with the "inadequate" attempts of his administration to normalize them.

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In the Wake of Vance's Visit: Ambiguous Conclusions

The article deals throughout with Secretary Vance's August visit to China and Peking's proclaimed dissatisfaction with the visit. It cites efforts by Chinese leaders, including Teng Hsiao-ping, Li Hsien-nien, and others, to "intimidate" and apply "deliberate pressure" to the United States in an effort to influence the internal US debate on how to proceed. Peking's disquiet is said to stem from the lack of movement in relations following the Secretary's visit, "while no substantial swing in the direction necessary for Peking was noted in attitudes within the United States either."

In attempting to sum up current prospects, the article's conclusions are ambiguous and in some respects contradictory. This may reflect in varying degrees the contradictory aspects in the Sino-US relationship itself, the various directions of the internal US debate on normalization, differing opinions within the USSR on the prospects for normalization, and coordination problems in the publication of an item on such a sensitive issue.

On the one hand, the article claims that "the general impression of observers adds up to the point that there is a firm basis for the development of relations between China and the United States." It also notes that "there has been lively discussion in the press on the theme of the coincidence or 'parallel nature' of US and Chinese interests and of the 'mutual concern of the two countries,' whether applied to the situation in the Asia-Pacific region or Europe, the Near East or Africa." Particular significance is also given to the fact that the first foreigner received by the Chinese after the 11th Party Congress was the US Secretary of State, and that foreign journalists assessed the talks as productive in a number of areas.

On the other hand, the author observes that:

- "The United States and China occupy different ideological positions."
- Washington "cannot fail to be worried by the undisguised militarism of the Chinese leaders and

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their reluctance to join in talks on disarmament and the limitation of nuclear arms proliferation."

- China continues to hold to its three conditions on recognition, and "Peking . . . will not make any compromise on questions of a Taiwan settlement."
- "It must be noted that many scholars have warned against the US Government harming American-Soviet relations by its actions in the Chinese question."

The article's lineup of present and former US Government officials on the normalization issue ranges from "M. Oksenberg of the National Security Council, who advocates normalization of relations with the PRC" on the basis of "Peking's anti-Sovietism . . . ," to George Kennan who "warns of the danger of normalizing relations between the PRC and the United States on an anti-Soviet basis."

And, Finally, The Warning

After carefully noting that there are even those in the United States who advocate the sale of Western military equipment and technology to China, the article concludes with the warning that:

"The Soviet Union and other socialist countries are following attentively the 'rapprochement game' being played by certain circles both in the United States and China and will not overlook actions--whoever undertakes them--which would exceed the bounds of the normalization of bilateral relations and could harm the legitimate interests of the socialist states."

The author again cites George Kennan in the article's concluding sentence to make the warning final and stress Moscow's interpretation of Washington's efforts to normalize its relations with Peking:

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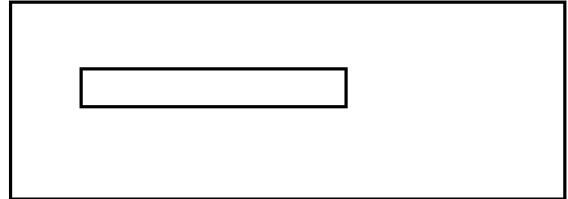
"It is difficult not to agree with G. Kennan, who in the book cited above advises the Western countries to find other more reliable and positive ways of improving relations with the USSR, instead of setting China against it, if they want to avoid a catastrophe and if, in the final analysis, they want the great, constructive potential of Soviet-American relations to be utilized."

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Moscow and the Cambodian-Vietnamese Border Conflict

Recent high-level Soviet visits to Laos and Vietnam underscore Moscow's continuing interest in Indochina and growing Soviet concern over the Cambodian-Vietnamese border struggle. In early February, General Pavlovskiy, Soviet Deputy Defense Minister, was in Laos reportedly to discuss a reorganization of the Lao armed forces. While touring Laos he may have conferred with Vietnamese counterparts on the fighting in Cambodia. At the end of February, Soviet Politburo member and Leningrad party chief Grigoriy Romanov was in Hanoi for seven days. According to a Soviet Asian specialist, Romanov, the first Politburo member to visit Vietnam since 1976, went to Hanoi to emphasize Soviet support for Vietnam in its struggle with Cambodia and to continue high-level Soviet-Vietnamese consultations.

The Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict has placed the Soviets in a difficult position. Moscow sees Vietnam as the major Southeast Asian state and the key to its continuing contest with China for influence in the area. The USSR is Hanoi's major source of foreign aid, which is designed to ensure that Moscow will remain the dominant foreign influence there.

Moscow has not, however, ignored the rest of Indochina. While apparently willing to funnel military aid to Laos through Vietnam, the Soviets have tried to increase their direct ties with Vientiane as much as possible. The Pavlovskiy visit was but one sign of this. Moscow even had hopes that it could establish normal relations with Cambodia. Before the conflict, the Soviets may have judged that Vietnam would eventually come to dominate Cambodia, much as it has Laos, and that this would provide entry for the Soviets.

For the first six months of the conflict, the Soviets largely ignored the fighting, perhaps in hopes that it would be settled before they were forced to choose sides. Following Cambodia's severing of relations

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with Vietnam in late December 1977, however, Moscow quickly threw its support to Hanoi. Moscow has yet to issue an authoritative statement on the struggle, but since the first of the year Soviet reporting and commentary have almost always echoed Hanoi's coverage and have praised Hanoi's peace "initiatives" and attacked Phnom Penh's "intransigence." On 8 February, for example, *Pravda* ran a long article replaying Hanoi's version of the history of the conflict and praising the Vietnamese peace proposal of 5 February. During Romanov's visit, the Soviet news agency TASS repeated this line.

In their public comments the Soviets have been careful, however, not to destroy all chances of a future rapprochement with the Cambodians. While Soviet coverage has blamed the Cambodians for the conflict, it has also implicated the West and Chinese. The border problem has been blamed on the French, who as colonial overlords arbitrarily drew boundaries with little regard for ethnic or national sentiments. Moscow has also accused the US of trying to exploit the situation. Until last week the Soviets had been more critical of the Chinese than Hanoi, but on 20 and 21 February--while Romanov was still in Vietnam--Hanoi implicitly accused the Chinese of inciting and aiding the Cambodians.

Soviet media coverage closely parallels what Soviet officials have said about the border struggle in private. In a recent conversation with a US Embassy official, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs Southeast Asian specialist claimed that the USSR fully supports Vietnam in its "just" stand and harshly criticized the Chinese, accusing them of following the old Chinese practice of "using barbarians against barbarians" to weaken and divide their neighbors. Since January, the Soviets have reportedly floated the story that the Chinese were behind the Vietnamese-Cambodian conflict.

Moscow would probably like to see the Vietnamese-Cambodian conflict brought to an end as soon as possible, since it is retarding Vietnamese recovery and complicating both Soviet and Vietnamese policy in Southeast Asia. Although anxious for a peaceful settlement, Moscow will support Vietnam as long as the fighting continues and use the opportunities the conflict presents to exacerbate Vietnamese-Chinese relations.

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